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QUESTION OF PALESTINE
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MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 22 March 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the press release issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its seventieth session, held at the seat of its secretariat in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 14 and 15 March 1999 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 38, 39, 40, 67, 74 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammad J. SAMHAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Press release issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its seventieth session, held at its secretariat in Riyadh on 14 and 15 March 1999

The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held its seventieth session on 14 and 15 March 1999 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Rashid Bin Abdullah al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates and President of the current session of the Ministerial Council. The meeting was attended by:

His Excellency Mr. Abdul Aziz Mohammed al-Fadil, Minister of Education of Bahrain;

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia;

His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman;

His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr Al Thani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar; and

His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

His Excellency Sheikh Jamil Ibrahim al-Hegelan, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, also participated in the meeting.

Expressing its deep sadness at the death of the late Emir of Bahrain, His Excellency Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, who passed away after a life full of outstanding achievements and great successes, of generous giving and assiduous effort to promote the development and growth of Bahrain and the prosperity of its people, the Council prayed to the Lord God to have mercy upon his soul and to grant him a place in Heaven.

The Council expressed its heartfelt gratitude for the contribution made by its dear departed brother to the development of the GCC, in whose establishment he had actively participated, and for his work on issues affecting his Arab, Islamic nation as well as peace and security in the region and the world.

The Council offers the Emir of Bahrain, His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, the ruling family and the people and Government of Bahrain its sincere condolences and commiseration, and wishes Bahrain and its fraternal people continuing progress, growth and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Excellency the Emir.

The Council warmly congratulates the Keeper of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, on the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and wishes the fraternal Saudi people continuing

progress, stability and prosperity under the wise leadership of the Keeper of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, King of Saudi Arabia.

Progress made in cooperation

Recalling the appeals made by the Supreme Council at its nineteenth session held in the United Arab Emirates from 7 to 9 December 1998 for further action to promote progress in cooperation, the Council reviewed a number of recommendations and decisions of the ministerial and technical committees concerning support for progress in cooperation among GCC member States. In this regard, the Council was informed of the recommendations made by the Committee on Financial and Economic Cooperation at its forty-ninth meeting held in Kuwait on 21 and 22 October 1998 concerning progress in economic cooperation in a number of spheres. The Council also reviewed measures taken to implement the resolutions adopted by the Supreme Council at its nineteenth session concerning standardization of the customs tariff for member States vis-à-vis the rest of the world and the establishment of a customs union. It stressed the need for greater efforts in that regard.

The Council reviewed progress in negotiations and dialogue with States and economic groupings. It heard a report on the subject from the general coordinator of negotiations, and provided guidelines for the holding of negotiations on a declaration of principles concerning cooperation between its member States and the member States of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

The Council also reviewed progress in the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Supreme Council at its previous session concerning military cooperation, and expressed satisfaction at the results achieved.

The Council considered the proposed transfer of the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for West Asia from Bahrain, and decided to support Bahrain's position that the office should remain in Bahrain in view of the excellent opportunities it afforded for close cooperation on a number of environmental issues and for the provision of technical and advisory support to the member States and the States of the region.

Political affairs

Implementation by Iraq of the Security Council resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait

The Council considered developments in connection with the implementation by Iraq of the Security Council resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait. It expressed its deep regret and concern at the Iraqi Government's continuing defiance of the wishes and resolutions of the international community, at its rejection of the Security Council's proposal concerning the setting up of three panels to evaluate files on the relationship between Iraq and the United Nations, and at its refusal to cooperate with United Nations bodies responsible for verifying the elimination of weapons of mass destruction being held by Iraq and which threaten that country, its people and its neighbours, as well as the security and stability of the region and the world.

The Council affirmed that the Iraqi Government bore the responsibility for exposing Iraq and the region to additional dangers and for exacerbating the suffering of the fraternal Iraqi people.

Recalling the statement issued by the Iraqi leadership on Sunday, 14 February 1999, together with previous and subsequent statements made by Iraqi officials, the Council condemned and categorically rejected Iraq's baseless claims and allegations and direct and grave threats made against the security and sovereignty of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Council affirmed that Iraq's persistent threats were evidence of a determination to ignore and disregard the wishes of the international and Arab community, as well as the clear positions outlined in Security Council resolution 949 (1994), the resolutions of the Arab Summit Conference held at Cairo in June 1996, and the statement issued by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Arab States at their consultative meeting held at Cairo on 24 January 1999, in which they appealed against any act of aggression or provocation against Kuwait and the neighbouring States. The Council urged the Iraqi Government to desist forthwith from making such threats and warned against its continued resort to reckless policies and threats. The Council urged the international community to denounce and condemn the Iraqi leadership's aggressive behaviour and to compel it to implement all the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly by instituting effective cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross for the release of both Kuwaiti and third country prisoners and detainees and by returning Kuwaiti property, with a view to restoring security and stability to the region.

The Council once more called on Iraq to take the necessary steps to demonstrate its peaceful intentions towards Kuwait and the neighbouring States by word and deed, and to acknowledge that its invasion of Kuwait had been a violation of legitimate Arab and international conventions, the Pact of the League of Arab States and the Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation Treaty between the States of the Arab League, as well as the Charter of the United Nations.

Recalling the firm position of the GCC member States and their Arab, regional and international responsibilities, the Council once more expressed its sympathy for the fraternal people of Iraq, who were suffering because of their Government's policies, and affirmed its determination to continue its initiatives to end that suffering, notwithstanding the Iraqi regime's rejection of those initiatives. The Council also affirmed the importance of preserving the independence, unity and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, and relations with Iran

(a) The occupation of the three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates

The Council reviewed developments with regard to the issue of Iran's occupation of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, islands that belong to the United Arab Emirates. Taking note of Iran's persistent and unacceptable claims concerning the three islands, its provocative military manoeuvres in the territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, its

establishment of an Iranian municipal headquarters and an educational installation on the island of Abu Musa in order to consolidate the occupation, and its imposition of faits accomplis, the Council again urged the Islamic Republic of Iran to translate its declared desire to improve relations with GCC member States, under the Presidency of Mr. Mohammed Khatami, into practical action by word and deed, providing a genuine response to the earnest and sincere appeals of His Excellency Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Head of State of the United Arab Emirates, the GCC member States, the parties to the Damascus Declaration, the League of Arab States, regional and international groupings and organizations and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for a peaceful settlement of the dispute over the three islands in accordance with the norms, precepts and provisions of international law. It called for the holding of direct negotiations or for referral of the case to the International Court of Justice, as constituting peaceful means of settling disputes between States and as a means of building trust and strengthening security and stability in the region.

In that regard, the Council reaffirmed the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa and its full support for all peaceful means and measures aimed at restoring the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the islands. It called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to end its occupation of the islands, to abandon its policy of imposing faits accomplis by force, to refrain from constructing Iranian installations on the islands in order to alter the demographic structure there, to abrogate all unilateral measures and dismantle all installations on the islands and to pursue peaceful means for the settlement of the dispute, in accordance with the norms and precepts of international law, by agreeing to refer the matter to the International Court of Justice.

Recalling the statement issued at its twenty-third extraordinary session held on 4 March 1999 concerning Iranian military manoeuvres in the occupied islands and territorial waters of the United Arab Emirates, the Council called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to desist from engaging in acts of provocation which, as flagrant violations of the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates, constituted a grave threat to regional security and stability and to regional and international navigation in the Arab Gulf.

(b) Relations with Iran

The Council reviewed relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in connection with bilateral communications between that State and GCC member States and in accordance with the established positions of its member States regarding the promotion of good relations with it based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, respect for common interests, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, non-use or threat of force and the settlement of disputes on the basis of dialogue and peaceful means as generally accepted among States. The Council reaffirmed its belief that an atmosphere of trust could be created, provided that the Islamic Republic of Iran took practical and credible action to resolve the issues between the two sides in accordance with the precepts and norms of international law governing the peaceful settlement of disputes, particularly the issue of Iran's occupation of

Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, islands which belonged to the United Arab Emirates.

The peace process in the Middle East

The Council reviewed developments in the peace process and expressed concern that the process had stumbled and stalled because of Israel's policies of procrastination, provocation and evasion with regard to the implementation of the Wye River Memorandum, sponsored by the United States of America and concluded between the Israeli and Palestinian sides on 23 October 1998, and all of whose provisions, by contrast, the Palestinian National Authority had taken immediate steps to implement, without delay or procrastination.

The Council categorically rejected and condemned Israel's provocative policy of establishing settlements on occupied Arab land, the Israeli Government's decision to extend its geographical borders to include the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and its modification of the demographic structure of the city in violation of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In that regard, the Council condemned the Israeli Parliament's decision of 26 January 1999 to pass a new law impeding the return of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to Syria and of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to the Palestinian people. It also condemned the Israeli Government's recent decision to include the Lebanese village of Arnoun in the occupied border strip in southern Lebanon. It wished the Lebanese people every success in liberating Arnoun from Israeli occupation.

In calling upon the Israeli Government to bring a halt to its expansionist policies and settlement practices in occupied Arab land, the Council reaffirmed its belief that the peace to which the States and peoples of the region and the international community aspired could not be achieved unless legitimate Arab rights were restored and unless there was a commitment to the relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The Palestinian people must be able to enjoy their legitimate national rights, particularly the right to establish their own independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and Israel must effect an unconditional withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan Heights up to the 4 June 1967 borders, southern Lebanon and the Western Bekaa, in accordance with resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978).

The Council expressed its gratitude to the sponsors of the peace process, the European Union and its member States, for supporting that process and helping to extricate it from the deadlock. It urged them to continue to intensify their effective and influential role in an effort to induce Israel to honour its commitments under the agreements concluded, particularly the Wye River Memorandum, and to resume negotiations with the Syrian and Lebanese sides with a view to bringing peace, security and stability to the region and its peoples.

In that regard, the Council again commended the European Union for its refusal to recognize Al-Quds, including the Western section of the city, as the capital of the Zionist entity.

The situation in Kosovo

The Council reviewed the evolving situation in the region of Kosovo and called on the international community to take decisive action to bring a halt to the massacres and criminal and terrorist acts being perpetrated by Serb forces against innocent Muslim civilians in that region, so that the people there might live in security and stability.

Elimination of weapons of mass destruction

The Council once more called upon the international community to take action to transform the Middle East region, including the Gulf, into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The Council affirmed that Israel must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and submit all its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency inspection regime.

Extremism, violence and terrorism

The Council reaffirmed its categorical repudiation of all forms of extremism, violence and terrorism from whatever source they came and whatever their causes might be, as posing a grave threat to the security and stability of States and to their citizens and residents. The Council affirmed the determination of its member States to resist and combat all such phenomena by intensifying communication, coordination and security cooperation. At the same time, it called on all States, particularly those tied to member States by relations of friendship and common interests, to take further steps to refuse shelter or political asylum to extremist and terrorist elements and groupings, and to prevent them from using their territory and exploiting their laws in order to carry out their activities, to perpetrate acts of terrorism and sabotage and to terrorize innocent civilians. The Council recalled the appeal made by the Supreme Council at its nineteenth session for the elaboration of an international convention to combat terrorism, affirming that the only appropriate means of combating terrorism and eliminating an international phenomenon which gave rise to human casualties and material losses was through concerted action by the international community within the framework of the United Nations.

Renewal of the mandate of the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs

The Council decided, in accordance with article 12 of its Statutes, to renew the mandate of the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, Mr. Ajlan Bin Ali Bin Umran al-Kawari, for a period of three years beginning on 1 April 1999.